Diplomatic Relations with Foreign Countries

679. SHRI IQBAL SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of India's diplomatic relations with various foreign countries in the world; and

(b) the specific steps being taken and the achievements made by Government to strengthen the bilateral relations with the neighbouring countries, country-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) Indo-US relations were further strengthened and diversified through high-level bilateral visits and regular consultations on bilateral, regional and international issues of common concern. India and US share many common features and ideals which provide a firm foundation for strengthening cooperation and mutual understanding which enables the countries to respect differences where such differences exist.

India-Canada relations have touched a new high level of maturity, mutual understanding and cordiality with a growing realization on both sides of the enormous potential of these realtions. The Canadian Prime Minister's visit to India in January, 1996 (accompanied by two Federal Ministers, seven Provincial Premiers, a large official delegation and over 250 businessmen) which produced commercial deals worth Rs. 86.91 billion, has provided further impetus for establishing close and broad based cooperation between the two countries. Trade and investment between India and Canada considerably expanded during 1995.

India maintains warm and cordial relations with all 33 countries in the Latin American region. Prime Minister visited Argentina and Colombia in 1995. The President Brazil visited India in January 1996.

Diplomatic relations with the countries of East and West Europe are good.

India has traditionally maintained relations of friendship, cooperation and mutual understanding with all countries of West Asia and North Africa. Prime Minister's visit to Egypt in October 95, Minister of State Shri R.L. Bhatia's visit to Tunis in October 95 and to Algiers in January 96, External Affairs Minister Shri Pranab Mukherjee's visit to Syria in November 95, Commerce Minister Shri Chidambaram's visit to Israel in January 96 and Israel's Finance and Education Minister's visit to India in January 96 have strengthened India's relations with countries of West Asia and North Africa.

India-China relations continued to improve steadily and to expand into new areas of cooperation. India has cordial and warm relations with Japan, South and North Korea. There are no bilateral disputes between India and these countries.

India's relations with Bangaldesh, Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka are warm and cordial based on mutual understanding and show countinuously improving trends with these countries. Pakistan persisted with its negative attitude towards normalisation of relations with India. Pakistan's support and promotion of terrorist activity directed against India is a major cause of tension between the two countries.

India maintains close, cordial and friendly relations with countries in the Gulf. These are characterised by exchange of visits, increasing trade flow, combined presence of two million strong Indian community, and increasing flow of investment into India.

India has close diplomatic relations with Iran marked by regular summit as well as Ministerial level contacts. The two countries have cooperation in bilateral and multilateral forum in the context of south-south cooperation, democratisation of UN system, regional development, etc.

Except for Fiji, India maintains diplomatic relations with all countries of ASEAN and South East Asia. India has diplomatic relations with all countries of Central Asia. The Missions are headed by Ambassadors except in the case of Azerbaijan which is covered by India's Ambassador in Turkey. India bilateral relations with each of sub-Saharan Africa are cordial.

(b)

CHINA

India-China relations continued to improve steadlily and to expand into new areas of cooperation. The Government continued to work for the establishment of long-term, stable and good neighbourly relationship with China and create a favourable climate in which the two countries can resolve outstanding issues including the boundary question.

Political contact between India and China continued through high level exchanges and consultations at other levels. The Prime Minister met President Jiang Zemin in New York in October 1995 during 50th anniversary celebrations of the United Nations. Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China. Qiao Shi, visited India in November 1995. The 8th meeting of the India-China Joint Working Group met in New Delhi in August 1995 and the 4th meeting of India China Expert Group was held in February 1996 in Beijing.

PAKISTAN

Government are committed to the resolution of all Indo-Pakistan issues through direct bilateral discussions as envisaged in the Simla Agreement. As a result of Government's initiative, bilateral discussions at the level of Foreign Secretaries of the two countries were held in January 1994. Since then Pakistan has not responed positively to Government's offer to resume bilateral dialogue.

NEPAL

The visit of former Deputy Prime Minister, Madhav Kumar Nepal from 6th to 10th February, 1995 and former Prime Minister Manmohan Adhikari from 10th to 14th April, 1995 to India resulted in a better understanding of matters of mutual concern and helped further consolidate ties between the two countries. The visits of External Affairs Minister to Nepal on 26—29 January, 1996 and Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba to New Delhi from 12—18 February, 1996 helped in further consolidation of traditional close ties with Nepal. The Nepalese Prime Minister's visit resulted in the signing of a treaty on the development of Mahakali rivers which represents a major breakthrough in the harnessing of river waters in the region for mutual benefit, as well as an Agreement on construction of 22 Bridges on the Kohalpur-Mahakali Highway in Nepal with Indian assistance. An Agreement concerning Electric Power Trade between the two countries was initialled during the visit. This Agreement would facilitate conclusion of Power Trade Agreements between Nepali and Indian parties, irrespective of whether such parties belong to governmental, semigovernmental or private enterprises.

As in the earlier years India continued to play an active role in Nepal's developmental efforts. Work is proceeding apace on the setting up of a Medical College and Institute at Dharan. Another major project for the construction of 22 bridges on the Kohalpur-Mahakali Highway in western Nepal has been initiated. Additional locomotives and coaches are being supplied to strengthen the service on the Jayanagar-Janakpur railway sector. Work on surveys for East-West electric railway, outer ring road at

Janakpur, broad-guaging of rail link between Raxaul and Sirsia, as well as other projects have been initiated.

BHUTAN

Traditionally close and cordial relations with Bhutan continued to be marked by deep mutual understanding. Bhutanese Foreign Minister and Planning Minister visited India in 1995. From the Indian side, the Foreign Secretary and the Cabinet Secretary visited Bhutan in October and November 1995 respectively.

India continued to be closely associated with Bhutan's developmental efforts. India's participation in Bhutan's on-going 7th Five Year Plan (1992—97) was reviewed during the Plan Talks between the two countries in New Delhi in July 1995. Major projects such as hospitals, schools, roads and bridges, transmission lines, rural electrification, survey projects are underway. The implementation of the 45 MW Kurichu Hydroelectric Project, agreement on which was concluded in September 1995 between Kurichu Project Authority and the NHPC is underway. Among the major projects under consideration are Tala hydroelectric Project (1020 MW) and the Dungsum Cement Plant (1500 TPD capacity).

BANGLADESH

Relations with Bangladesh are cordial. There are a few areas of disagreement. It is our endeavour to focus on finding bilateral solutions to contentious issues such as sharing of river waters, transit question, repatriation of Chakma refugees, illegal immigration from Bangladesh into India and increase in economic cooperation. We are ready for discussion as soon as the situation in Bangladesh permits.

MALDIVES

Relations with Maldives are warm and cooperative. Specific interaction on manning of Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, and continuing cooperation in the fields of education, human resource development, medical and para-medical fields and trade continue.

MYANMAR

We have stable and cordial relations with Myanmar. Border trade with Myanmar is continuing. Sectoral level meetings and National level meetings for fostering better cooperation and improving border management continue on schedule. Interactions to prevent smuggling of drugs and narcotics has been achieving good returns.

SRI LANKA

Trade and commerce with Sri Lanka are on the upswing. India has extended a US $ 30 million credit line to Sri Lanka. Politically, relations between the two countries are friendly and continuous dialogue is maintained to advance the mutual interest of both countries through constructive cooperation.

AFGHANISTAN

Despite unstable conditions prevailing in Afghanistan, we have reopened our Embassy in Kabul in May 1995. Bilateral dialogue with the Afghan government on various issues of interest to both sides is continuing. We are receiving Afghan trainees for various technical, educational courses in India under Government of India scholarships. We are providing humanitarian assistance to the Afghan Government on a regular basis. The steps taken have strengthened bilateral relations and there is increased understanding of each other's position in every sphere.

सुल्तानपुर में नया उप-डाकघर खोला जाना

680. **श्री महेश्वर सिंह:** क्या संचार मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार को कुल्लू जिले के सुल्तानपुर में